

South Georgia, Marion Island, Crozet Islands, Kerguelen Islands, Heard Island, Auckland Islands and Antipodes Islands. As a breeding bird it thus shares with the Georgian Diving-petrel (*P. georgicus*) a more southerly zone than that occupied by *P. urinatrix*.

W. R. P. Bourne (Notes on the diving-petrels, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.*, 88, 1968: 77-85) discusses the possibility that some of Murphy and Harper's subspecies of *P. urinatrix* might be better aligned with *P. exsul*. As the name of one of these subspecies, *berard* Gaimard, antedates *exsul*, the Kerguelen Diving-petrel would be known as *P. berard exsul* if Bourne's hypothesis proves correct.

—G. M. STORR and R. E. JOHNSTONE,
Western Australian Museum.

King Penguin Egg washed ashore in Western Australia.—On 10 January 1974 a large egg, well-covered with a growth of algae, was found on the beach about two miles east of Augusta on the south coast of Western Australia. Three beach fishermen picked it up at high water mark, looked at it, and threw it behind the first line of sand dunes. On 12 January, by sheer chance, I was in Augusta and one of the fishermen, Lew Yates of Bridgetown, mentioned the occurrence to me. With his son and several children I crossed the Blackwood River and walked down the beach approximately to where the men had found the egg. After an hour's searching and when on the point of giving up I found the egg, unbroken, among the sand dune vegetation.

The egg shell was white, although slightly stained, perhaps from the algae. The surface was pitted and the egg was typically penguin in its peg-top shape. Its measurement, 100 x 75 mm, fell within the size range of eggs of the King Penguin (*Aptenodytes patagonica*) as given by Serventy, Serventy and Warham (*The Handbook of Australian Sea-Birds*, 1971) and by Mathews (*Birds of Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands and the Australasian South Polar Quadrant*, 1928). Unfortunately there are no specimens of King Penguin eggs in the Western Australian Museum with which to compare the Augusta egg, but there seems little doubt of its identification as that of a King Penguin, which was confirmed by Mr. T. E. Bush.

I blew the egg for a specimen and was surprised to find that it contained a well-advanced embryo, quite undecomposed and with no odour of decay.

The most reasonable explanation of its presence is that it had been washed into the sea from one of the sub-antarctic nesting colonies in the southern Indian Ocean (Marion I., the Crozets, Kerguelen or Heard Is.). Being in an advanced stage of incubation it floated and was carried eastwards in the West Wind Drift. The egg-laying season of the King Penguin is recorded as between late November and mid-April and Mr. Yates's party must have found the egg almost immediately after it had fetched up on the beach.

The finding of this egg will inevitably revive speculation that the celebrated and mysterious Scott River "Big Egg" had similarly drifted here from Madagascar (its finding was reported in the *West Australian*, May 3, 1962, p. 1, and its origins discussed by R. C. Hyslop and C. J. Spackman, *Angusta Jewel Caves*, 1967, pp. 16-17, and by Harry Butler, *Science Digest*, March 1969, pp. 70-73).

—G. A. LODGE, Boyup Brook.

Breeding of the Larger Spiny-tailed Skink, *Egernia stokesii*.—In early July, 1975 when I was picking mallee roots on my father's farm 14 miles west of Wubin I found two lizards unusual in the district. They were 10 cm long and were at the bottom of an old pile of roots. The soil in the area was a red sandy clay. At school next day they were identified as young *Egernia stokesii*. They were released where found.

Over the next few weeks several other individuals of the species were

brought into the school, including two adults. These latter had been brought into Dalwallinu in a load of roots and were only found when the root was chopped. One skink had been injured, having a two-inch cut in the abdominal wall. It was kept at school for treatment. The skink responded to chloroform by going almost immediately into a state of semi-consciousness but it was difficult to induce a complete anaesthesia. The injury was repaired with the aid of some fishing line and adhesive tape and the skink appeared more alert after the operation. It was released at a later date but was not seen again.

My science teacher asked me to release the healthy adult skink where I had previously found the young lizards on my farm. The lizard was very fat in appearance and proved to be a gravid female. A young was born on August 12 and measured 10.8 cm. At the first opportunity, when the young was three days old, I brought them to school on the school bus. The young one was then weighed and measured. It was 11 cm in length and weighed 15.5 gm. Subsequently I took the skinks back home but before I was able to release them the young lizard disappeared. About three weeks later my mother found it in the passage of our house. I was hoping to do some more research on it but coincident with the reappearance of the lizard was the appearance of a tick on my father. The skink got the blame and my mother ordered its immediate release.

—ROBERT NANKIVELL, Dalwallinu District High School.
(Year 9 Student).



Adult female *Egeria stokesii* with newly born young.

Predation on *Stigmodera (Themognatha) tibialis* by a fly.—The following observations were made on March 2, 1975, while we were collecting insects feeding on the flowers of *Eucalyptus foecunda* on Balladonia Station, W.A. near Afghan Rock (lat. 32°22' S, 123°40' E). At about 10.45 a.m. western standard time, we saw a large specimen of a *Stigmodera (Themognatha)* species fly into a clump of eucalyptus flowers 9 m above ground level at the top of a flowering tree. Some 15 minutes later in the same tree we noticed that a large beetle was suspended, apparently by one of its elytra, from a small branch underneath the blossom some 8 m above ground level. On closer inspection we saw that the beetle was being held by a large Asilid fly which was feeding on it. The fly was in a vertical position with its head down and was feeding on the beetle which it held vertically, also